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ABSTRACT

The evolution of social knowledge into the social science disciplines has stilted intellectual activity; moreover, social education perpetuates these disciplines without critically examining the bases of their existence. Although the most widely accepted criteria for determining a discipline is that it have a structure of basic principles and a specific mode of inquiry, the standard attempts to define a social science discipline result only in descriptive statements of what the "disciples" do and what exclusive language they use. For example, most definitions of the social sciences envelope the content of other fields. History, anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology, political science, and economics all endeavor to examine the actions of humans; none have unique structures of knowledge or modes of inquiry. The implications for social education are great. The current dominant social mentality is functionalist; it operates to preserve and protect the established social order. This functionalist ideology is expressed in social studies curricula and texts and in the social sciences themselves. The social studies curriculum assumes that the disciplines offer truth rather than tentative theories; the result is the imposition of dominant class values, norms, and assumed order without criticism. (KC)

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# Disciplines, Disciples and Ideology in Social Education

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Among the many practices which characterize academic writing is a penchant for definition: either by an attempted imposition of newly minted terms to describe well-known phenomena, or by recourse to acknowledged authority to define terms newly discovered by the writer. The former, of course, is the domain inhabited by the sophisticated social scientist who seeks to imprint the field with jargon which bears his or her name and, thus, gain fame and fortune. The latter is the domain of neophytes, undergraduate students and those who lack self-confidence. A taxonomy of authorities used by those without confidence would surely begin with definition by dictionary and move up to quotations from standard figures in the area and citations to classic documents.

According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, the word discipline is defined as: "a branch of knowledge involving research; training which corrects, molds, strengthens or perfects; control gained by enforcing obedience or order..."

and disciple is defined as: "One who receives instruction from another; an adherent of a school, as in art or philosophy..." and disciple serves as one of the synonyms for scholar, although classified as archaic usage, when there is "devoted adherence to the teachings of the master."

Ideology, in the same dictionary, is defined in one form as the "manner or content of thinking characteristic of an individual or class."

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The obvious common elements of the three terms are the basis for this paper. The argument is that the development of some branches of knowledge has created sets of disciples who have or desire control of the curriculum and who operate ideologically to enforce obedience. Rather than engagement in critical inquiry, the search for truth, or skeptical analysis of a part of human intelligence, these "disciplines" have built ideological barricades around themselves, insulating their work and creating an aura of status for their disciples that exceeds their ability to inform the human condition.

The historic intellectual accidents by which fields of social knowledge have evolved as separate compartments have stilted and constricted intellectual activity. Certainly, the imposition of specific "disciplines" on the curriculum of social education and the internecine warfare among them have not contributed noticeably to the development of intellectual activity among students, although these efforts have stimulated more discipleship.

Disciplines

Attempts to describe and define disciplines are a recurring phenomenon in the social sciences. The recent splurge in discipline identification and thus separation occurred as a result of large amounts of grant money available for curriculum development in the 1960s. It was, of course, of considerable self-interest to a field to be identified as a discipline since that eliminated critical examination of the quality or value of the social product of the field; it provided sanction for disciples to obtain funds for furthering the claims of the field; and it gave the field renewed avenues of access to teachers, students, and publishers.

This effort to establish the separateness of social disciplines produced an extensive literature and some extraordinary self-justifications, but no long-term logical basis for meeting the two conditions laid down by Jerome Bruner from the Woods Hole conference: a structure of basic principles and a specific mode of inquiry. These may not be the only, or even the best, criteria to apply for determining disciplines, but they were the most widely recognized. Unfortunately, the means for using the criteria were not always clear, and the assumption that stating something establishes it went virtually without challenge.

In fact, the critic of "disciplines" in social education was labelled anti-intellectual, beneath dignity, or fuzzy-headed. Only disciples could explain a discipline. The result of this extensive and uncritical discipline development was a body of literature which claimed to represent the separate structures or knowledge and unique modes of inquiry in each social discipline.

An examination of some structure and inquiry claims of separate discipline enthusiasts may prove informative. In history, for example, Collingwood is cited by Fenton as the basis for a definition which says that "history is a kind of research or inquiry," to "find out about the actions of people in the past," by "interpreting evidence" and encouraging "reflective thinking leading to human knowledge." (Fenton, 1966; Collingwood, 1956) It is my suspicion that that definition could be used in any field. It provides neither separate structure nor separate inquiry.

Anthropology is "an overlapping study with bridges into the physical, biological and social sciences and into the humanities" (Kluckhohn, 1949),

and "properly encompasses the biologic, psychologic, social and cultural aspects of man" (Dubois, 1963). This, at least, is an open-minded view and no more imperialistic than most other social sciences. But it provides no separation from them. Instead, it incorporates them and portions of other sciences and humanities.

For geography, Richard Hartshorne (1959) notes that it provides the chorological principle--areal associations of things and events. Preston James (1965) agrees, noting that three purposes for geography education are: "a general understanding of the arrangement of things and events over the whole surface of the earth,...to teach the pupil to ask geographic questions,...to teach the language of the map." Warman (1965) elaborates a structure which includes such things as language and literature, law, commerce, education, religion, art and family in areal association.

History's unique structure and inquiry modes apparently encompass the actions of people in the past; anthropology's domain is human culture; but geography covers space. Is there something beyond time, space and matter? And do these categories not exist as centers of Venn diagrams, the nexus of knowledge rather than separation into specific discipline? And if one does separate, what is left for other social sciences to claim as dominion?

Sociology's answer is to envelope all study of society. Kidd (1911) in the Encyclopedia Britannica claimed that "all leading contributions to the general body of western philosophy have been contributions to the science of society (sociology)" since the 17th century. He noted that there have been several substitutes suggested for sociology: politics, political

science, social economy, social philosophy and social science. Rose (1966) and Inkeles (1964) seem to accept this broad sweep of the science of society. Can society exist outside of time, space and matter, or are history, geography and anthropology part of sociology? In one strain of sociology the whole of knowledge is included. Jenks (1977) edited a provocative collection of papers which addressed philosophy, language, science, literature, culture and mind, all under the purview of reflective sociology. Young (1971) and Bernbaum (1977), along with Jenks and others whose work informs this paper, use sociology as a central construct for the examination of all human endeavors.

Psychology has been defined similarly as a synthetic discipline, as in: "it is the science of human and animal behavior, both individual and social." (Harvard Committee, 1947). And Webb (1961) notes that in psychology, "Our subject matter has become quite boundless: muscle twitches and wars... porpoises and the problems of space, in the aesthetic qualities of tones and sick minds, psychophysics and labor turnover." Psychology is often not included in discussions of the social science bases for social education curriculum (Lowe 1969, Feldman and Siefman 1969, Morrissett, 1967), but it is certainly consistent with the social sciences in its denotation of structure, content and methodology. (Hardy & Kutz, 1973, Rudner, 1966). Essentially, this work suggests that the social sciences, including psychology, use underlying principles, objects of study and modes of research which are common rather than unique.

Political Science has been identified as a discipline which studies "any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent, power, rule or authority." (Dahl, 1963), or Easton's (1965) comment

that "what distinguishes political interactions from all other kinds of social interactions is that they are predominantly oriented toward the authoritative allocations of values for a society." Methodologies used in political science include philosophic and historic study, theory and model use, comparative methods and behavioralism. (Handy and Kurtz, 1973). Elderveld (1952) notes that "many of the techniques and concepts developed, particularly by psychology, social psychology and sociology, for the study of human behavior in general are applicable to the study of human behavior in politcs."

Although political science takes on the allocations of value as a central concern, economics often has the same basis. Sometimes it goes further. Von Mises (1949, ~~p. 880~~) suggested that economics, as a branch of a more general theory of human action, deals with all human action..." McConnell (1939, ~~p. 903~~) comments that "the realm of pure economic institutions cannot be isolated." Despite long-term serious efforts to blend mathematics into economics and to create a science of the field, there are current indications of a "widely held view that the discipline of economics is in disarray." (Hollingsworth, 1982, ~~p. 9~~). A special issue of The Public Interest (1980) is titled "The Crisis in Economic Theory," and contains several papers which criticize the inability of the field to generate those basic principles or laws of explanation. There is a movement toward the British interest in political economy as a more appropriate study.

There are several other fields which lay claim as social sciences to discipline status, but which also suffer from lack of distinction in structure and method. These would include jurisprudence, education, information theory, game and decision theory, women's, ethnic or urban studies, sociolinguistics

and others. While these areas have their disciples and bodies of literature, they remain outside the encampment of the "social sciences," because of simple traditional barriers and the politics of academe. They seem no less worthy of the claim as disciplines, given the great difficulty in finding logical and consistent grounds for uniqueness between the traditional fields of the social sciences.

## Knowledge and Society

Schools, among other things, are knowledge industries. The most commonly expressed purpose of schooling is to impart knowledge. Certainly, skill development, proper behavior and attitudes are also major purposes of schooling. But the central core is involved with knowledge. Few educators will say that[2] they only want students to learn skills or behaviors.

We strive to have students come to know things about mathematics, science history, literature, arts and society. Presumably, we emphasize the skill of reading in elementary school in order to have students come to know something by reading. We have classes in vocational subjects to teach what is known in those areas. We organize field trips to City Council or an art gallery to add to student knowledge. And in universities faculty members are expected to be engaged in the production of knowledge. Schooling at every level has knowledge as a significant element of the enterprise.

It is not enough, however, to merely say that schools are knowledge machines and that teachers are knowledge merchants. An examination of this basic purpose of schooling is essential. Knowledge is not a neutral thing. It is not pure truth, unsullied by human intervention or conflicting values. Rather, knowledge is the result of human activity and is necessarily value-based. It is in the center of debate over schools and between functionalist and critical views of education.

There are several key questions about knowledge which suggest its controversial nature:

1. What is knowledge and how should it be organized?
2. Which knowledge is most important?
3. Who should control production?

4. Who should control the distribution and transmission of knowledge?
5. What is the relation between social, economic and political ideologies and the kind of knowledge deemed important?

The first question may seem absurd. The general impression is that knowledge is self-evident and it is organized according to the many disciplines. That impression is the result of a western tradition that defines knowledge in terms of categories self-defined by those who have socially approved credentials. In ohter words the categories of knowledge we use are dependent, in large measure, on the traditionally defined disciplines as described usually by those who have studied them in approved institutions and conveyed them in discipline-mainstream communication channels.

This partly answers the remaining questions in the list above. Each question deserves fuller treatment, but that is better done outside this paper. One or two examples of practice in social education may illuminate the ideological configurations toward which these questions point: The recent development of "free enterprise" chairs for economics departments at major universities, and required "free enterprise" courses in public schools; behavioralist emphasis in political science in schools, and obedience themes in prominent law-related education literature; re-emphasis on nationalist education in history and ethnic studies; increasing censorship of forms of values education and other controversial teaching material. These examples illustrate the functionalist basis on which social education rests. They, and the mystique of the social science/history disciplines which informs the dominant social education mentality, can be described as functionalist in that they operate to preserve and protect the established

social order, continue the preeminence of certain group interests, and exert control. (Gouldner, 1970) Deviant views are considered dysfunctional. They are treated with disdain, ostracism or censorship.

This functionalist perspective in the social science and social education tradition is examined in a variety of recent critical works. (Apple, 1979; Popkewitz, 1977; Anyon, 1978; Giroux, 1981) The textbook studies demonstrated a "static view of society and a predominantly functionalist perspective that stressed social harmony and stability and gave a negative view of the nature and value of conflict." (Arnot & Whitty, 1982, p. 96) The social education curriculum analyses, involving consideration of the hidden curriculum and socialization further identified the ideological bases of the field and practices associated with the educational reproduction of that ideology. (Giroux and Penna, 1979) Aad Popkewitz examined school texts books to elaborate his thesis that the 1960's movement to a more strongly discipline-centered social studies curriculum was not adequate because it ignored the social context of the social sciences, assumed that the disciplines offered truth rather than tentative theories, and "created conditions which actually impede the free inquiry they sought to foster." (Popkewitz, 1977, p. 41)

It is the functionalist ideology which is expressed not only in social studies curricula and texts but also in the social sciences themselves. The standard attempts to define them as disciplines are descriptive statements of what disciples do and the language form they use, or grand generalizations enveloping the content of other fields. The descriptive statements, although intended to be neutral, actually perform the function of reification without criticism. These assist in the socialization of neophytes into full fledged disciples; thus, social science discipline reproduction. The grand generalizations

suggest academic imperialism, the active portion of academic hegemony. In both cases the functionalist qualities of dominant class imposition of values, norms and assumed order without criticism are exhibited.

The social subjects, from elementary school through graduate study, are necessarily entwined with ideology. (Nelson, 1981; Nelson and Carlson, 1981) Unfortunately, the ideology is seldom subjected to critical scrutiny. Social disciplines exist not because they have mutually exclusive structures or inquiry modalities, but because they have traditions, disciples and norms of language and behavior. Social education, rather than skeptically or critically examining the roots of these branches of knowledge, merely accepts and reproduces them.

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